



**yolo**  
You only live once.

# Campaign Guidebook

**Montgomery County Department of Transportation  
High School Pedestrian Safety Toolkit**



Whether in the classroom or on the street, student safety is a priority for everyone involved in the education of Montgomery County's youth. That's why the Montgomery County Department of Transportation is partnering with Montgomery County Public Schools to raise awareness of the risks of distracted walking and other dangerous pedestrian behaviors.

Each year more than 400 crashes involving pedestrians occur on Montgomery County roadways. Safe Kids Worldwide tells us that high-school-age students are particularly at risk. Teens ages 15 through 19 make up half of all underage pedestrian fatalities. And in Montgomery County, when pedestrians are found at fault in collisions, they are most often teens in this age group. Many teens take undue risks when crossing the street, or they walk while distracted by texting, playing handheld games, listening to music, or talking on the phone.

To encourage safe pedestrian practices among our high school students, we have created the YOLO campaign and toolkit to help schools raise awareness of the risks of dangerous pedestrian behaviors. Inside the toolkit you will find an assortment of campaign posters, static clings to go on restroom mirrors, and a USB drive with other digital resources. We encourage you to read the enclosed campaign guidebook for instructions and customizable ideas on ways to implement a pedestrian safety education program at your school.

**Thank you for helping us spread the word about pedestrian safety!**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Arthur Holmes, Jr." in a cursive style.

**Arthur Holmes, Jr.**

Director, Montgomery County  
Department of Transportation

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Joshua P. Starr, Ed.D." in a cursive style.

**Joshua P. Starr, Ed.D.**

Superintendent, Montgomery  
County Public Schools

## Overview

The safety of students while they're in the classroom or on the streets is a priority for everyone involved in the education of Montgomery County's youth. Whether your school is already doing work around pedestrian safety or looking for ways to start, this guidebook will serve as a great tool to help your school community put together a pedestrian safety education program.

### Why this Matters:

- Each year more than 400 crashes involving pedestrians occur in Montgomery County.†
- 78 percent of teens perceive the most at-risk age group for pedestrian injuries to be one other than their own.\*
- In Montgomery County, of people ages 10-29, teens 15-19 make up the largest percentage of pedestrians who are at fault in collisions.‡
- Teenagers ages 15-19 make up 51 percent of all underage pedestrian fatalities. They have twice the death rate of younger children.\*



- Half of students (49 percent) say that they use a cell phone when walking to school.\*
- Maryland is in the top 10 states with the greatest number of pedestrian fatalities among youth ages 12-19.\*
- 1 in 5 high school teens crosses the street while engaging in a distracting behavior, such as texting, playing handheld games, listening to music, or talking on the phone.\*



†Montgomery County Police Department, 2013

\*Safe Kids Worldwide, *Teens and Distraction*, 2013



*In October 2012, 15-year-old Christina Morris Ward was struck and killed as she crossed the street—distracted—on her way to school. Christina was a sophomore at Seneca Valley High School in Germantown, Maryland.*

**Getting Started:** Pedestrian safety is a year-round issue. You can incorporate any of these ideas at any point in the school year. However, we ask for special emphasis during **October** and again in **April** to coordinate with efforts across the County and the region. In October, schools across the country participate in International Walk to School Day. This event takes place the first Wednesday of the month. Also during this month, daylight hours get shorter, which leads to reduced visibility and an increase in crashes involving pedestrians. Therefore, this is a critical time to get safety messages to high school students. In April, spring weather prompts more outdoor activities, including walking to school and other places. This is another good time to reach students with safety reminders. The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments' *Street Smart* campaign is also active around these times, which includes increased enforcement of pedestrian safety laws.

Learn more about the regional *Street Smart* campaign at [BeStreetSmart.net](https://www.bestreetsmart.net).

## Messages

The following are key campaign messages we hope you will help us communicate to high school students. Subsequent sections will give you ideas for how these messages can be targeted to the students at your school. These safety tips could mean the difference between life and death.

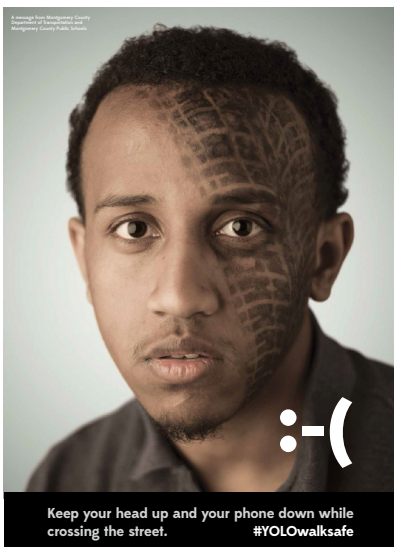
- Look up! Put devices down and listen before crossing the street.
- Make eye contact with drivers to be sure they see you.
- Walk on sidewalks and watch out for cars that are turning or backing up.
- Cross at street corners with crosswalks and wait for the walk signal.
- If you need to use your phone, stop on the sidewalk and find a safe area to talk or text.
- If you are wearing headphones, pull them out or turn the volume off before you cross the street.
- Be aware of others who may be distracted—and speak up when you see someone who is distracted.

## Resources

**You Only Live Once.** YOLO, short for “You only live once,” is popular teen slang that essentially means “carpe diem.” It’s often used as a hashtag on Twitter and Instagram and usually refers to brash decisions without regard for consequences. However, when this tongue-in-cheek phrase is paired with visuals of deadly repercussions, it becomes an ominous warning of dangers on the road. The YOLO campaign uses photographs of local Montgomery County teens to address the risks—and the ultimate consequence—of distracted walking.

Included with this toolkit are resources to help you get critical safety messages to the students at your school. All materials feature the #YOLOWalksafe hashtag, encouraging students and other stakeholders to share the campaign on Twitter, Instagram, or other social media.

**Posters:** Ten posters featuring local Montgomery County High School students cover multiple safety messages. Place the posters in prominent areas around your school. Consider displaying them on or near exit doors to remind students as they leave campus.



Don't forget to check whether your school has any restrictions on poster placement.

If you are interested in more posters, please contact Nadji Kirby with Montgomery County DOT at 240-777-7169 or [nadji.kirby@montgomerycountymd.gov](mailto:nadji.kirby@montgomerycountymd.gov).



**Mirror Clings:** These removable clings are designed to place at eye level on bathroom and other mirrors. This nontraditional tactic will engage students by allowing them to see themselves as a crash victim, as portrayed in the posters and other materials.

**Pledge Banner:** Students can pledge to walk safely by signing this fabric banner with the enclosed fabric markers or wide-tip sharpies. You can give participating students a pledge card with safety tips as a reminder. Designate a week to drive signatures and then display the banner in your school.

**USB Drive:** Digital resources can be found on the USB or on the Montgomery County Public Schools' website [MontgomerySchoolsMD.org/safety](https://montgomeryschoolsmd.org/safety). Many of these materials can be customized for your own school's communications channels.

- Customizable letter/email to parents (English and Spanish).
- Parent tip sheet (English and Spanish).
- PA announcements.
- Social media components including graphics and pre-written tweets and posts.
- Talking points for meetings or assemblies.
- Web banners.
- Electronic poster files.
- “Moment of Silence” video PSA, which can be played on video announcements or at assemblies.

## Partnerships

### Create a Walk Safe Workgroup

By putting together a Walk Safe Workgroup, you garner buy-in from critical stakeholder groups. The Walk Safe Workgroup can guide outreach efforts by generating input and ideas on what will work best for your particular school. Ideally, recruit at least three student leaders; two teachers, coaches, or other staff members; and at least one parent representative. Other stakeholders could include representatives from campus law enforcement and business leaders near the school.

### Other Partners



- **Parents:** Parents are key touchpoints for your students. Loop them into your efforts by sending a letter or email highlighting the issue and encouraging conversation at home. Contact the PTA and use their meetings and communications channels to reach parents.



- **Businesses:** You can involve businesses near the school. Ask them to put up posters in their establishments, donate raffle prizes, or volunteer for your pedestrian safety events. Don't forget to say thank you to participating businesses!



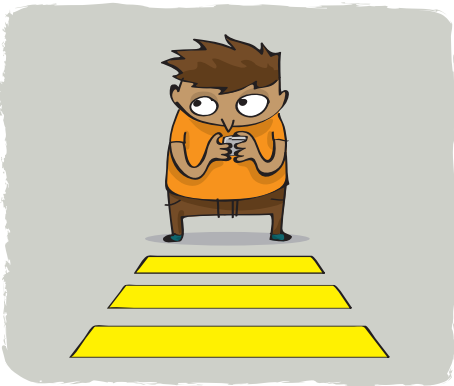
- **Montgomery County DOT:** We are here to help you get started and guide your process. If you need additional materials, contacts for special speakers, or have any questions, feel free to reach out. We also want to hear about your success! We will feature the efforts of different schools on the web and in our future materials.



## Planning Events

One of the best ways to raise awareness and generate buzz around any issue is to engage students and stakeholders in an event. You can also invite media to cover your event to raise awareness even further and generate positive news coverage for your school. We've included several event ideas to help keep your efforts fresh year after year.

**Safe Walking Pledge Drive:** The simplest event for a school to implement is to host a safe walking pledge drive. Student leaders can set up a table in a public area for other students to visit and sign a pledge banner. The toolkit includes a banner that can be signed with fabric markers or wide-tip sharpies. Students can also create their own banners with butcher paper and paint or markers. Once the pledge drive is over, the banner can be hung in a prominent place to remind students to walk safely.

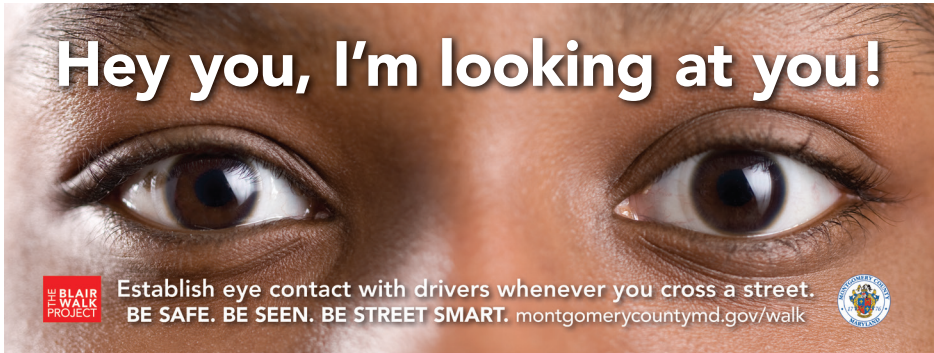


**Chalk It Up for Safety:** Enlist the help of students to write safety messages with sidewalk chalk at intersections near your school. Messages can include:

- **LOOK UP**
- **DEVICES DOWN**
- **WAIT FOR THE WALK**
- **STOP, LOOK, LISTEN, THINK**

**Safe Walk Service Project:** As a service project, high school students can help educate elementary school students on how to safely cross the street. Safe Routes to School has curriculum that can help train student volunteers how to teach elementary kids safe pedestrian behaviors. Contact Montgomery County DOT for more information on a “train the trainer” session for high school volunteers.





*Montgomery Blair High School highlighted the “make eye contact” message with their best eyes competition.*

**Best Eyes Competition:** This event is based on successful efforts at Montgomery Blair High School and highlights the “make eye contact” message to ensure that drivers see pedestrians before they step into the street. Have a photo station set up in a common area with a designated photographer to take pictures of participants’ eyes. Use a raffle incentive to encourage participation; for example, gift cards from local businesses. Once all the entrants have been photographed, either set up a display where students can vote or use social media to garner “likes” as votes. Have an art student create a poster with the winning eyes to post all over your school. A suggested headline is “The eyes have it” with the subhead “Make eye contact to be sure drivers can see you before crossing the street.”

**Glow-in-the-dark Pep Rally:** This fun and creative school assembly highlights visibility as a key pedestrian safety issue. Enlist the participation of cheerleaders, the dance team, band, and other school organizations to perform with glow sticks, flashlights, spotlights, reflectors, or black lights. This theme can be used for an existing pep rally event or you can create a specific assembly for pedestrian safety. Your school can even sell glow sticks as a fundraiser. If you are tying it to an existing event, remember to include time for a spokesperson to give a few talking points on pedestrian safety.



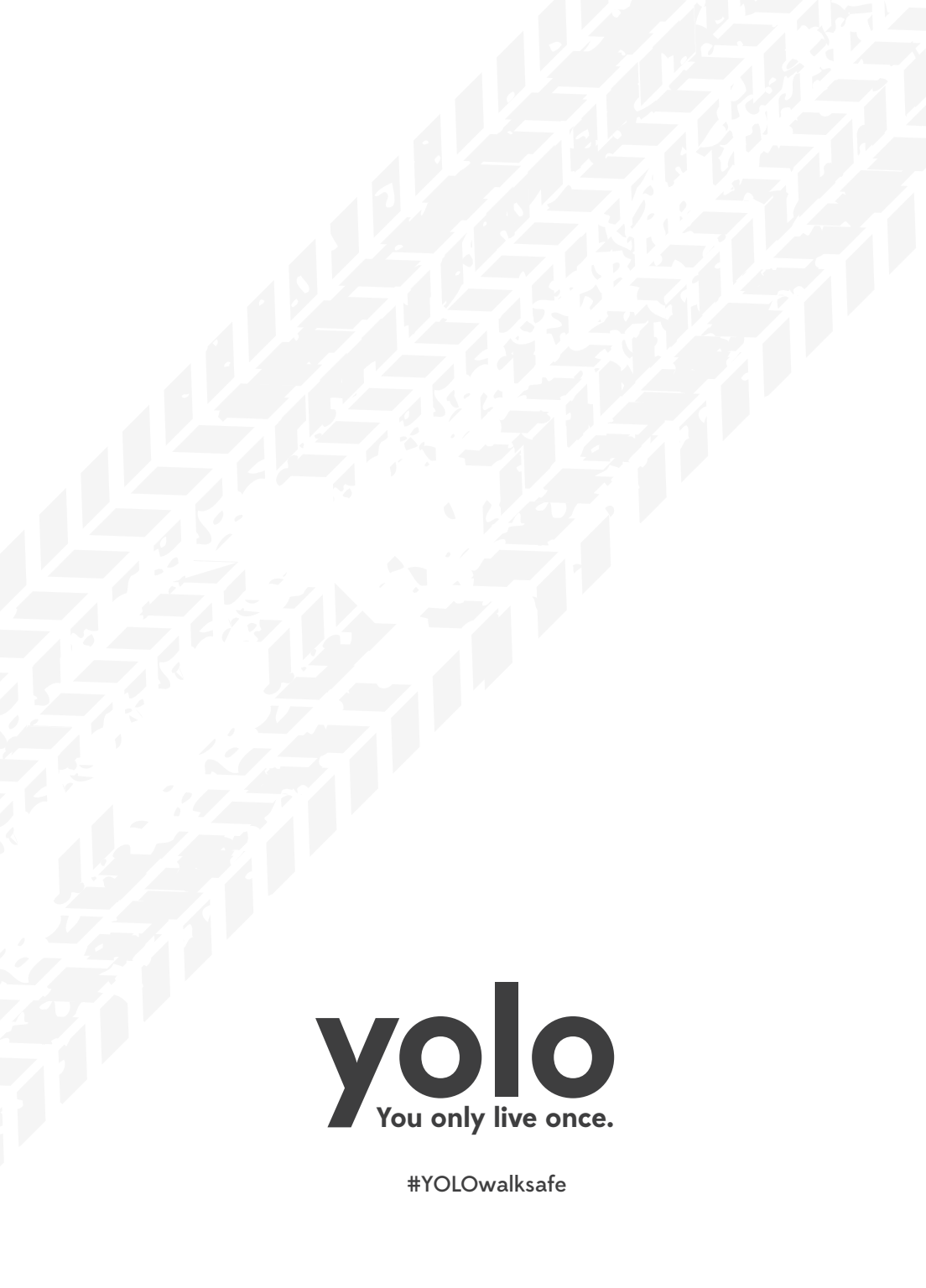
*James Blake High School made this performance in memory of the 72 pedestrians killed in the Washington region in 2012.*

**“Band Together” Musical Assembly:** Partner with your school’s band to create a dramatic and memorable event. Ask the band director to choose a mournful music selection. Midway through the performance, a bell (or triangle) should ring every few measures in memory of someone killed while crossing the street. With each ring of the bell, a band member stops playing his or her instrument and lays it on the ground, along with his or her band hat. The song should end with a lone trumpeter playing amid a sea of abandoned instruments.

**PSA Contest:** Have students or student groups create their own artwork with a pedestrian safety theme. This could take the form of posters, videos, or even chalk art or mural designs. Showcase the winning entry online and around campus. You can even have students paint the winning mural somewhere in or near the school.

**International Walk to School Day (WTSD):** WTSD takes place the first Wednesday of October and is a global event that involves communities from more than 40 countries walking and biking to school on the same day. Some schools use WTSD as a kickoff to their other pedestrian safety activities planned for the school year. Schools can celebrate this day in various ways. For your WTSD event, you can simply encourage students to walk to school that day and highlight the occasion in your morning announcements, organize a nearby meeting place and have students and staff convene and walk to school together, or have students walk together around your field or track. It's completely up to you! The idea is to get students walking to promote safer streets, a healthier lifestyle, and cleaner air. For more information and to get ideas about what your school can do, contact Montgomery County DOT at 240-777-7170.

**1 Mile Walk in Silence:** This solemn event recognizes those hurt or killed while crossing the street distracted and reminds students to take a moment to lower their cell phone, headphones, or game player. The Walk in Silence also coordinates with Safe Kids Worldwide's "Moment of Silence" video PSA. Outline a one-mile route near or around your school. You can also use your school's track. Before the walk starts, be sure to go over each of the safe walking messages—cross at the crosswalk, wait for the walk signal, and put your devices down. Have all participants walk in silence, with no external distractions. All cell phones, iPods, and game players should be put away. Encourage participants to wear white for a strong visual element and to remind students that light-colored clothing increases visibility.



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#YOLOWalksafe